

HORTICULTURE DIVISION.

REPORT OF J. A. CAMPBELL, DIRECTOR.

THE FRUITGROWING INDUSTRY.

The horticultural year under review has been an exceedingly productive one as far as the grower of pip-fruit is concerned. Although unusually wet weather was experienced in the main fruitgrowing centres during the early part of the spring, the exceptionally dry conditions which prevailed during the setting and growing period resulted in the apple crop being a record one. Stone and small fruits were, however, not so well favoured, and the crops of these, generally speaking, were on the light side.

The lemon crop was a satisfactory one. The bulk of the fruit produced is of a quality which, subject to proper curing and fuller methods of distribution, bids fair to displace the imported fruit on the various markets of the Dominion.

The climatic conditions were against the development of the majority of orchard diseases and pests, and in some localities black-spot disease, which usually takes a heavy toll, was almost negligible, while brown-rot in stone-fruits was much less in evidence. It was found necessary to take legal proceedings in a few instances where growers had neglected to take the necessary steps to control such diseases as powdery mildew, codlin moth, and red spider.

Pear-midge has again been troublesome in the Auckland District, retarding growth and causing considerable loss of fruit. No satisfactory means of control has yet been arrived at, but experimental work is still being carried on by officers of the Division and private growers in co-operation with the Biological Laboratory, while the Entomologist is dealing with the question of natural enemies of the pest.

The control of fireblight has received close attention, and, beyond a slight extension in the Taranaki District, no serious headway has been made by this disease in the infected areas during the year.

Colonies of *Aphelinus mali*—the natural enemy of the woolly aphis—have now been distributed to practically all the main commercial fruitgrowing districts, and reports to hand indicate that excellent work continues to be done by this beneficial insect in eradicating the aphis.

Some 140 acres were planted in commercial orchards during the year. A number of abandoned orchards were cut out, leaving the total area in commercial orchards for the whole of the Dominion at approximately 30,000 acres.

A new departure in the spraying of orchards is the installation of stationary spraying plants in several large orchards in the Nelson District. In this system the engine providing the power is installed at a fixed point. Pipes are laid systematically throughout the orchard and the material forced through at high pressure. Reports to hand indicate that the system is giving satisfaction to the respective owners. The question as to whether any difficulty such as corrosion will be experienced in the future is a matter that only time and use will decide.

Owing to a report that fruit-fly existed in the Dominion, the Argentine Government prohibited the importation of New-Zealand-grown fruit into that country. The embargo was, however, lifted pending the report of two Argentine experts who were sent to New Zealand for the purpose of investigating the position. The two officials (Senors C. A. Lizer y Trelles and E. E. Blanchard) arrived here about the middle of February last, and were given every facility by the Department in carrying out their investigations. The different fruitgrowing districts in both the North and South Islands were visited by the experts, who, on the completion of their inquiries, confirmed the Department's statement that fruit-fly was non-existent in New Zealand, and reported to their Government accordingly.

EXPORT OF FRUIT.

A total of 236,870 cases of fruit were exported during the 1925 export season. Of this total 213,371 cases of apples and 3,465 cases of pears were shipped to Great Britain; 16,675 cases apples to South America; 2,465 cases apples to Honolulu; 250 cases apples to Vancouver; 593 cases apples and 51 cases pears to the Pacific islands. The bulk of the fruit was exported under the Government guarantee of one penny per pound net return to the grower.

The earlier shipments to England arrived, with few exceptions, in very good condition, and the market opened brisk at very satisfactory prices and good demand till about the middle of June, when soft fruits caused a considerable falling-off in demand. Prices, however, maintained a satisfactory level until late in the season, when the overripe state of the later shipments resulted in a good deal of waste and lower rates. The fruit shipped to South America arrived in good condition, having been forwarded in cool storage instead of as ordinary cargo as was done in the case of previous shipments, and realized satisfactory prices. The export season taken as a whole was a satisfactory one from the point of view of returns to growers, and claims under the guarantee did not exceed £3,425.

A scheme of advertising New Zealand fruit was carried out by Mr. T. W. Attwood, representing the New Zealand Fruitgrowers' Federation, attractive posters being displayed in all the underground stations and other prominent public places in London.

The Government guarantee has again been extended to shipments made during the 1926 season, and will apply to a total of 750,000 cases of apples and 8,500 cases of pears. As the result of a bountiful harvest it is anticipated that the quantity exported will be in the vicinity of these figures. In November last Colonel Gray proceeded to London as representative of the Fruit-export Control Board for the purpose of investigating the markets at Home, and to supervise the fruit shipments.